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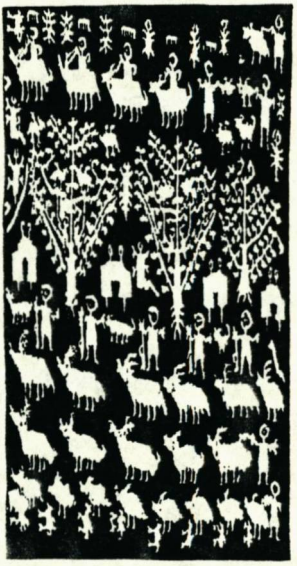
Statement on the question of East Timor to the UN Committee of 24, August 1988

by

Komitee Indonesie



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Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the Decolonisation Committee,

As the representative of the Dutch Indonesia Committee which campaigns against human rights violations perpetrated by the present Indonesian Government, I want to thank you for the opportunity to present a statement on the matter of East Timor, a matter that unfortunately has been firmly on your agenda ever since 1975, the year that the Indonesian forces invaded the country. Hopefully my statement can clarify some aspects and features of the Indonesian illegal presence in East Timor.

Mr. Chairman, the Indonesians have a lot to hide in East Timor. this explains the region is still sealed off from the outside world and remains one of the most isolated and tightly closed areas in the world today. Even the very few hand-picked foreign diplomats who have been allowed to visit East Timor in the past few years express their frustration because their movements were restricted by the Indonesian Government. The same applies to foreign journalists. The last time a group of journalists of any credibility was allowed to enter was in 1985. Last November, the correspondent from the **Far Eastern Economic Review** had his permit to visit East Timor revoked at the last moment by the authorities. The same happened this year to the reporter of **The New Yorker.**

Requests by many international organisations to monitor human rights in East Timor have all been in vain. The pattern

has remained the same ever since the Indonesian invasion. Only a very select and restricted number of people are allowed in, and only for a very restricted period. No visit is allowed unless it suits Indonesia's interests.

General Murdani, who is now Indonesia's Minister of Defence and the architect of the Indonesian invasion of 1975, reacted furiously to the suggestion that East Timor should be opened up, warning: "If things fall to pieces, don't blame Hankam (Ministry of Defence) and ABRI (Armed Forces)"(**Suara Pembaruan** June 27,1988), clearly indicating that the heavy military presence is still needed. The Indonesian appointed governor of East Timor has pleaded several times to open up the area, arguing that "otherwise the people will lead a stagnant life causing deteriorations in all fields". (**Indonesian Observer** July 25,1988). Carrascalao's pleas have failed to impress President Suharto who apparently has taken General Murdani's advice to uphold the current status as a closed area. Other top military like Admiral Sudomo, Coordinating Minister for Security and Political Affairs, and General Try Sutrisno, commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces focused on the other side of the East Timor tragedy: the colonial aspect. According to them the region "is still young and needs attention" and "like a young member of the family, it needs to be built up", typical of the patronising attitude of latter-day colonisers (**Kompas** June 29,1988)

Foreign diplomats confirm the statements of the Indonesian top brass in their own way. One diplomat carefully stated: "There is not a spontaneous, relaxed atmosphere between the military and the villagers", while another diplomat confirmed that there was "still an atmosphere of a conquered society". (**The New Yorker** June 13,1988).

Mr. Chairman, East Timor, Indonesia's "27th province" can best be described as a military project run by the Indonesian Armed Forces. The structure in East Timor is quite unlike any other administrative unit. Besides the normal territorial administrative structure under a governor, there is a special structure called the **Team Pembangunan Timor Timur** (Development Team for East Timor) directly under the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, while a special centralised military command, the **Komando Operasi Keamanan Timor Timur**, or Security Operations Command of East Timor is above the territorial military structure and in charge of the conduct of war.

The International Institute of Strategic Studies in London estimates that some 20 battalions, about 15.000 troops are permanently deployed in East Timor, an indication of the continuing state of war. For an Indonesian military stationed in East Timor, every East Timorese young or old, is a suspect. This can be confirmed by any East Timorese who has managed to leave the area in the last decade. As one refugee has remarked: "I never cease to wonder. We had been in Indonesian hands for a long time, they had armed us to take part in the fence-of-legs operations (a counter-insurgency military operation launched in the early eighties). Yet when election time came, they didn't trust us so we were detained" (**Tapol bulletin** no 88, August 1988). The attitude of the Indonesians is typical of a colonial power, full of contempt and hostility. They have turned East Timor into a kind of huge garrison where the people are restricted in their movements and curtailed in every way, marginalised and systematically excluded from emjoying a decent and ordinary way of life.

It is quite horrifying, Mr Chairman, that the

Indonesian armed forces are using East Timor as a battle and training ground for their troops. Experience in East Timor has become an important asset to the career of any Indonesian officer. Virtually all the generals in strategic positions today are East Timor veterans, virtually all of them have East Timorese blood on their hands. One striking example is the mercurial rise of General Adolf Rajagukguk, the present deputy chief-of-staff of the army. East Timores refugees describe this general as the worst murderer of them all. In the words of one refugee: "About 80 per cent of the Fretilin guerillas captured during his term (as military commander in East Timor) were murdered". (**Tapol bulletin**, no 88, August 1988).

Mr. Chairman, human rights abuses is a fact of life in Indonesia but in East Timor everything takes a more extreme form. Take, for instance, the so-called trials of political prisoners. The Indonesian judiciary began staging show trials in 1984 to create the impression that no political prisoners are being held in prison without trial. Now refugees have revealed that the trials held in Dili were a mockery of justice. Prisoners were told that they would never be released unless they agreed to go on trial. Those who agreed were required to sign false confessions to provide the necessary 'process-verbale' so that a trial could be staged. Indonesia is stage-managing the trials only in order to polish its tarnished international image, but the International Commission of Justice and Amnesty International were refused permission to attend these trials.

Having staged this charade, the Indonesian Government is now falsely claiming that Dili prison is the sole prison in East Timor, with a second prison under construction in Maliana. This conceals the fact that most people arrested for political and

security reasons are held and, in most cases brutally maltreated, in district and sub-district military commands, the **Kodims** and **Koramils**, and may never be brought to Dili for so-called trials.

Mr Chairman,

Another ugly feature is the way birth control is being carried out in East Timor. Depo Provera, the controversial contraceptive injection, is the most widely-used device in East Timor's state-run birth control program. In March 1987, the US Catholic Bishops' Conference commented on the birth control program in East Timor saying: "Given the great loss of life that has already taken place among a largely Catholic people, this Indonesian policy takes on the character of genocide". Official figures reveal that the Indonesian family planning program in East Timor devotes more money and personnel to family planning in East Timor than elsewhere, but devotes far less effort to spreading information on the basis of which people might be expected to join the program of their own free will.

In sharp contrast is the woeful state of health care in East Timor. The Indonesian appointed Governor Carrascalao made strong complaints recently about the insufficient number of midwives, with the result that the death rate among children under five has continued to rise. Of the 2,379 deaths in East Timor in 1986, according to the governor, 1,184 were children aged 0 to 4 years. This means that children under five accounted for half the deaths. Of these 1,184 deaths, 838 or 70 per cent died at birth. In the whole of East Timor, there are only 25 midwives and 18 of these prefer to reside in the capital, Dili. Carrascalao also attributes the high mortality rate to the poor nutritional condition of pregnant women and the lack of periodical examination and information about immunization . **Suara Pembaruan,**

June 20, 1988.

Mr. Chairman, the shocking state of health care is just one aspect of East Timor's suffering. In general, it must be stated that in all areas of life, economic, social, welfare and education, the situation is deplorable. Carrascalao has used the word 'stagnation' to stress the alarming situation in East Timor. East Timorese peasants do not want to increase their agricultural output, for the surplus cannot be marketed in other regions because they run up against the 'closed area' regulations, which prevent East Timorese from moving in and out of the region. At the same time, East Timorese have to pay much more for many basic needs like cooking oil and refined sugar, which cost 25% more than in Indonesia. At the same time, the rate of unemployment has grown dramatically as regional potentials like mining, tourism, livestock, farming, fisheries, small industry, handicrafts and other activities have been left to wither. Foreign capital as well as private Indonesian capital is simply not prepared to invest in East Timor, because the tight security controls and the continuing war situation makes the region one of the least attractive places to start an enterprise.

Until very recently, the Indonesian propaganda machine was boasting about gigantic development and economic achievements in East Timor, but today we hear nothing about all this. East Timor's 'bright future' has turned out to be a sick joke. Indonesia's mounting economic difficulties, on top of the corruption that runs riot everywhere, has directly affected the budget of East Timor. Projects half-finished or derelict have become a common feature in the Timorese landscape. All those glamorous development schemes, agricultural and industrial, worked out by Indonesian technocrats in previous years have been

put back onto the shelf to gather dust. Even coffee production, once the pride of East Timor, is in decline, and is well below the 10,000 tons per annum produced in the days of Portuguese colonialism.

Those projects that have been executed are either typical status symbols or for military purposes. Examples of status symbols are the almost-completed official residence of the governor in Dili which is costing 359 million rupiahs, and the construction of a huge, costly cathedral, also in Dili, which is being built with financial assistance from General Benny Murdani. The present armed forces commander, General Try Sutrisno, has just turned over another 350 million rupiahs to complete the construction of the cathedral. Another example is the newly built harbour at Com near Lospalos. Originally intended for the shipment of agricultural products out of East Timor, the harbour is primarily being used for the disembarcation of fresh troops to the eastern part of East Timor.

Mr. Chairman, internationally, East Timor remains an issue and, as a senior Indonesian diplomat has admitted :"It's like a bone in our throat" (**The New Yorker** June 13, 1988). In the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, a strong resolution on East Timor has been passed. The International Parliamentary Union has also passed a resolution, while recently, a new organisation was launched in Lisbon called **Parliamentarians for East Timor** initiated by MPs from the UK, Australia and Japan.

In face of all this, Indonesia is launching a new diplomatic offensive regarding East Timor. In a few days time, a delegation of members of the European Parliament will be visiting East Timor. This visit has officially been announced as an effort to counter the resolution passed by the Political Affairs Committee,

the intention being to try to prevent the plenary session of the European Parliament from endorsing it in September. It is a foregone conclusion that this delegation will not be allowed to see the real situation in East Timor. Theo Sambuaga, a Golkar (the Government Party) spokesman, said recently that Indonesia "will refuse anyone desiring to go to East Timor for fact finding as it means interfering in the internal affairs of Indonesia (**Jakarta Post** July 18, 1988). In other words, there can be no question of these parliamentarians conducting an independent, on-site investigation on the human rights situation in East Timor.

Mr. Chairman, the era of colonialism is, quite justifiably, in decline. Even Indonesia finds it necessary, these days, to proclaim its support for efforts to end colonial situations like those persisting in Namibia and New Caledonia. And yet it refuses to recognize the inalienable right of the East Timorese people to determine their own future. Such stubborn, colonial arrogance need a firm stand and positive action from the United Nations, whose standing has been greatly enhanced by recent developments.

Mr. Chairman, many hopeful developments are occurring in the world, today. Wars, regional conflicts, the relaxation of tensions between East and West, all indicate that a new era of peace and justice is on the horizon. We eagerly hope that the United Nations and the Secretary-General will play a decisive role in the peace process in East Timor, in conformity with General Assembly Resolution 37/30 of November 1982. Only in this way can there be a true act of selfdetermination for the people of East Timor.

Thank you so much.

New York, 12 August 1988